

Our Dark Lord



1: Core Modules

Alpha
Version 0.1.2a

Written and developed by Peter Casey

BEING BLANK IS MY INTENDED PURPOSE

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Intro

THIS IS AN ALPHA RELEASE.

THE MATERIALS AND RULES MAY BE INCOMPLETE AND ARE SUBJECT TO MAJOR REVISIONS. FORMATTING IS QUICK & DIRTY FOR ALPHA RELEASE.

Our Dark Lord is a narrative game where the players take on the role of high ranking minions in service to a “Dark Lord”. One person takes on the responsibility of presenting the world and playing the associated characters in it, such as the Dark Lord himself and other minions (as the “narrator” of the story). The other participants take on the role of seasoned minions.

Minions generally live and work in the lair of the Dark Lord. They do not work for the garden variety witch or basement inventor. Minions serve supervillains, dark prophets, immortal priestesses, and other such leaders. It's a strange life that calls to those special few. Only a rare handful of those followers will survive and thrive to climb the ranks. The players portray their Dark Lord's cream of the crop (“name characters”).

The alpha release is divided into “modules” covering different aspects of Our Dark Lord from character creation to common enemies. Placed together, they represent the full system. Some modules may add optional rules, cover additional potential elements of play, or offer alternate options from the default system. This release covers the core rules and basic play, as well as a few starter scenarios.

ODL can scale from “ground level” management to the Dark Lord’s inner circle. The default presentation is for “ground level” characters and stories. The main characters are generally lab managers, small department leaders, advanced researchers, awarded special operatives, and similar figures. Expansion modules will explore upper management and inner circle characters.

Play consists of portraying the characters and describing their actions. It is a collaborative story. While many actions are resolved through talking it out, other actions rely on a test for resolution. The default test system uses pools of six-sided dice with a win/loss count.

ODL is split by default into two parts: Missions and Life. Missions are everything from day-to-day tasks to end-of-the-world epic quests. It’s the minions doing their job, from more menial tasks around the lair to globe-spanning hunts with huge stakes. Life is the personal and daily life of minions. They *are* people after all and have lives to live. However, their devotion to a Dark Lord makes things a bit off-kilter from the norm. Life/work balance has never been harder.

Preparing the Story

Setting the Stage

These are all optional suggestions. You may find other approaches to setting up the story work better for you and your group. You may only wish to use some of these suggestions. That is perfectly keen! Use whatever works for you and maximizes the fun at your table. This section is to provide brainstorming material. Use it as a starting point for the prologue and setup phase of your story building.



What World Are We In?

Make sure everyone understands the kind of world the story takes place in. Is this a world of mad scientists and hyper-spies? Of sorcerers and secret orders? What's the general flavor and theme of your Dark Lord world? The narrator should take some questions and players should be able to offer input into what kind of world they want to tell stories in.

Make sure everyone understands who their Dark Lord is. All of the players should serve the same boss and work as a team or be at least work friends. Discuss some of the inner circle and/or upper management, so the players understand who they report to and who's in the hierarchy above them. Describe the lair and its surroundings, as well as the general public image of the Dark Lord and organization.



Who Are We?

Since the player characters should start play as a team or familiar coworkers, the players and narrator are encouraged to discuss their ties. Talk about individual quirks, viewpoints, and attitudes. Describe your character's personalities and have a few pre-game in-character conversations. Take a little time to get to know each other's characters and hash out how you see and interact with each other.

What's Going On?

Perhaps tell a few stories about recent events in the world before the game start. What has the Dark Lord been doing lately? What's the general state of the world? What's been going on in the lair? What's the latest gossip going around with the minions? Ground people with a good flavor for the starting point of the story. Allow the players to contribute stories and help flesh out the world their characters live in.

What is currently happening? What's the Dark Lord's current focus? What type of default work are the minions currently assigned? What's the work or personal day like that is starting off play? It's a good idea for folks to have a solid idea of what's going on "right now" as play officially starts.

Opt-Outs

It's a good idea to have an opt out system for story content. The characters **are** serving a Dark Lord. The missions individual scenes, and even general content can take some extremely dark turns. We're all getting together for some fun. If a particular thing or the depth of detail is upsetting to someone at the table, it's polite to move on to something else.

You should use whatever opt out system suits your group, but we encourage the narrative control and consideration an opt out provides. There are a large

number of options. “X Cards” are one popular options. In Our Dark Lord, the default rules include a seamless opt out system. Every player receives 3 Story Points to use each session (optionally 5). There’s no need to declare a reason for the narrative pivot. See “Story Points” in the default addons chapter for more information.



The Ultimate Rule

The number one goal is for everyone at the table to enjoy themselves . Use whatever rules or rules modifications work best for you. Adopt whatever style fits the group. Be ridiculous and have fun. Play it straight and explore the psychology or drama. Dark Lords also fit well into horror, science fiction, and weird fiction story. **Do whatever makes y’all happy.**

Motif Story Engine: Adventure

Our Dark Lord uses one of the Motif Story Engine family of systems. MSE Adventure is a straight forward system based on a few character traits and six-sided dice (d6). Designed for action and adventure tales, the focus is on skills and storytelling. The dice rolls inject an element of chance and excitement for active conflicts, difficult tasks, and similar actions.

Automatic Actions

Tasks that are trivial or simple for the skill set level or roles of a character should simply but fully succeed automatically. A skilled pilot shouldn't need to roll dice for a standard flight or a talented programmer to build a straightforward database. A skilled expert shouldn't fail to run basic tests and nobody should experience an epic loss just trying to start their car.

Enforcing dice rolls for every action can also become a grind and be very disheartening for players. Dice should only be rolled when the difficulty or story action demands it. **Let the characters be good at what they're good at by default.**

When in doubt, default to letting the player automatically gain a simple success (2 net wins). If someone receiving an automatic actions want to achieve a better than a basic win result, they must then roll.

Dice System



- Start with base dice.
- Add a relevant Skill Set and any other bonuses.
- That's the total dice you roll (dice pool).
- You roll that many six sided dice.
- Count each die for wins and losses.
 - Roll 3, 4, 5, or 6 , get a win.
 - Roll a 1 or 2, take a loss.
- Subtract losses from wins.
 - Positive totals are wins.
 - Negative totals are losses.
 - Zero sum totals are “draws”.

OPTIONAL :

- Always reroll 1s, wins do not count on the reroll, only losses.
- Always reroll 6s, losses do not count on the reroll, only wins.

Base Dice

For generic actions, like driving or searching, characters receive 3 base dice by default. For all other actions (such as using professional skills) or particularly specialized/difficult version of generic actions (like jumping a car over a canal or trying to find a hidden safe), the player only rolls 1 die by default. Org roles can change the base dice for certain actions.

Skill Sets

Each minion starts with three skill sets providing from 1 to 3 additional dice on related actions. When trying to accomplish a task related to a skill set, they receive the bonus dice. They are also one of the most common sources of automatic actions.

If there are multiple Skill Sets available for a task, use the highest or most relevant Skill Set. If you have additional relevant Skill Sets, you may add +1 bonus dice to the roll.

Roles

Private Roles

Private roles provide 1 to 3 bonus dice on specific actions. When undertaking one of their role actions, they gain the additional dice stated under the role. Private roles may also provide automatic actions as appropriate.

Org Roles

Org roles change the default dice on certain actions and provide additional skill sets. Org roles also provide access to resources which make provide dice pool bonuses or allow minions to do certain things as automatic actions.

Results Scale

Wins

1. With 1 win, the character partially succeeds when possible or succeeds at a cost.
2. With 2 wins, the character simply but wholly succeeds.
3. With 3 wins, the character dominantly succeeds with some benefit or better than expected result.
4. With 4+ wins, the character delivers a truly top class performance, succeeding at the peak of human ability or beyond.

Losses

1. With 1 net loss, the character merely falls short of their goal and fails without additional consequence.
2. With 2 net losses, the character “has a bad day” and performs miserably, wholly failing without question and possibly incurring an appropriate penalty.
3. With 3+ net losses, all the random elements fall into place in the exact wrong way and the character completely botches their attempt; should incur a severe penalty that creates an extreme immediate inconvenience or a long term disadvantage. The severity of the penalty should match the severity of the situation and importance of the action.

Draws

When the total is zero, the result is a “draw”. The attempt usually simply fails. The player may chose to instead take a partial success, where possible, at a cost. In cases of dodging, escape, and other defensive actions, a draw counts as partial success.

Character Creation

Complete base kit:

Name, Skill Sets, Private Role

Choose your character's "real" name

Choose 3 skill sets, one each at +3, +2, +1

Choose a private role

Add minion kit:

Codename, Term, Org Role

Choose your character's codename

Choose how long they've been serving the Dark Lord

Choose an organization role

Default add-ons :

Story Points, Status, Quirks

Start with 3 Story Points

Start with two slots each, Physical and Mental, for Status

Choose quirk packages in collaboration with narrator

Base Kit

Name

Real name or main nickname.

Skill Sets

Professions and hobbies, including all associated skills, licenses, and contacts. There are examples listed below, but they are merely examples to help generate ideas. Players and narrators should collaborate on skill sets to balance the best fit between their characters and stories. Feel free to be inventive and come up with a wide variety of ideas.

Characters receive three skill sets by default: a career, a hobby, and an interest.

Examples : Nurse , Polyglot, Electrician, Programmer, Occultism, Musician, Sales, Sewing, Electronics, Historian, Soldier, Dancer, Accountant, Teacher, Chef, Codebreaking, Painting, Pilot, Carpentry, Smuggling, Mechanic, Public Relations, Gardening, Architecture, Sculpting, Singing, Gymnastics, Archery

- Career, main skill set or profession, biggest bonus (+3)
- Hobby, secondary skill set or dedicated amateur pursuit, middle bonus (+2)
- Interest, tertiary skill set or minor hobby, smallest bonus (+1)

Org roles provide additional skill sets. Skill sets provided by org roles behave like the default skill sets except where otherwise noted. They represent additional training and experience, befitting their position in their Dark Lord's army.

Private Role

Private roles are the role that characters take on in social situations and circles or otherwise in their private life. They provide sets of skill bonuses on specific types of actions. They also will influence the general attitudes of those who know or know of your character. The listed examples are merely examples to serve as a guide and aid in quickplay. Narrators and players should feel free to create new roles or use modified versions of the examples.

Characters receive one private role by default.



Confidant :

A confidant is the open ear among their friends and acquaintances. When someone needs to talk, the confidant is the one they come to talk to. Some are charismatic and others chose their words with care. All of them are talented in gaining trust and getting others to open up.

- +1 on all actions related to being “the one everyone talks to”
 - +2 on discovering or remembering useful bits of gossip and snippets of knowledge
 - +3 on getting people to talk to , believe, or trust you
-

Den Parent : A den parent is the friend who always has people over, often feeding them regardless of how hungry guests claims to be. They are also often the shoulder to cry on and a source of hope & inspiration. Their calming presence reminds everyone of a beloved older figure, no matter the age of the den parent.

- +1 on all actions related to being “the one who takes care of everyone”
 - +2 on making people feel at ease,
 - +3 on hosting, caretaking, and mediating
-



Elder : An elder is the one who has been around the block a few times. They've survived a bit more of life and a bit more of service to the Dark Lord than most. Their age and experience provides them with a bit of hindsight and wisdom. They are also fonts of institutional knowledge.

- +1 on all actions related to being “the one who’s been around forever”
 - +2 on getting insight into situations and individuals
 - +3 on providing advice & guidance
-

Locator : Locators are the friends who find thrill in the hunt. They are the people you drag with you to find the true hidden gems at a thrift store. They are who you ask if you need an obscure part for an old machine.

- +1 on all actions related to being “the one who can find almost anything”
 - +2 on scrounging yard & estate sales, abandoned places, and scrapyards
 - +3 on locating hard to find & hidden places and features
-



Outsider :

Outsiders live on the fringes of their social circles and society. They are often closer to squatters and black market vendors than they are their supposed friends and family. While their reasons vary, they have taken on a life that gives them an in with the society just beneath the surface of everyday life.

- +1 on all actions related to being “the one nobody notices and everyone forgets”
 - +2 on finding black market vendors and sources
 - +3 on knowing places to lay low and where to find stashes
-



Party Hub :

From the one who organizes every office party to the wild raver who drags his friends along to midnight warehouse parties, party hubs are always finding some reason to celebrate. While their exuberance and hedonism can be over the top, it is an infectious influence and they do seem to know just about everyone.

- +1 on all actions related to being “the one who is always party central”
 - +2 on knowing someone, knowing someone who knows them, or at least where to find to a lead
 - +3 on convincing people to cut loose or bend the rules
-

Researcher :



Note: Researchers pick an area of specialty. Players are encouraged to pick a specialty of one of their Skill Sets.

Researchers have a thirst for knowledge that “mere” reading and education cannot slake. Whether they are obsessed with hunting down information about small details, diving into obscure corners of knowledge, or live for library and information sciences, they have mastered the art of research. If you cannot find some piece of information, researchers are your best bet.

- +1 on all actions related to being “the one who knows everything about [*your area of specialty*]”
- +2 on finding rare or difficult to access bits of information and hard to reach experts
- +3 on accessing libraries, databases, and the offices of experts

Minion Kit

The minion kit adds another layer, building on the sheet created with the base kit. These additional attributes transform a regular character into a seasoned minion. This will round out the player character (PC) and complete the default sheet.



Codename

The codename or designation used by fellow members of the villainous organization, probably the only name many of them know you by. This can be a number, position title, an ominous street name, or so on.

The narrator and players should discuss how minions are referred to under their Dark Lord, both ground level minions and management level minions like the PCs.

Term

Character's length of service with the Dark Lord (should usually be between 3 and 15 years).

A shorter term makes it harder to access subordinates, equipment, and other resources. However, upper management will cut greener managers more slack and generally demand less of them.

A longer term provides an intimate knowledge of the lair and much easier access to resources. But it comes at the steep cost of being burdened with more responsibilities and failures & shortcomings being judged more harshly.

Narrators should adjust the responses of upper management according to the character's term of service.

Org Role



Org roles define the type of niche a character fills within a Dark Lord's organization. They provide access to sets of resources, grant additional trained skill sets, and change the base dice received for certain actions.

These are general example org roles for reference and quick play. Narrators and players should feel free to collaborate to tailor and create roles suited to their particular story and Dark Lord. ***Minions choose one org role.***

Expert:

Experts are prized researchers and consultants. Nobody else has knowledge as broad and deep as an expert. They head up labs, research teams, and maintenance teams for high end equipment.

- 3 Base Dice on all tasks in one scientific or academic field.
- 2 Base Dice on all research, experimentation, and lab-based actions
- 3 +3 Skills Sets in extremely specific specialties.
- 3 +1 Skill Sets in applied sciences, applied humanities, or research related skills.

Resources :

- Access to any **relevant** lab, construction materials, rare research materials, general and special personnel, restricted records, and similar lair resources.
 - Access to special equipment and experiments related to their Base Dice specialty field.
 - Privileged access to upper managers based on expertise; use with caution.
 - Rarely questioned on area of expertise, able to even override management; use with caution.
 - Greatest range of access to classified records and projects, even outside of direct areas of expertise; use with caution.
 - Greatest freedom to manage work and personal time, often operating with little to no direct supervision; use with caution.
-

Leader:

Leaders are the ground level management of a Dark Lords organization. They are tasked with leading field teams, small departments, equipment bays, and similar levels of responsibility.

- 3 Base Dice on all tasks related to management, inspiration, and bureaucracy
- 2 Base Dice on all tasks related to deflecting blame and suspicion
- 3 +2 Skill Sets related to management, planning, logistics, or psychology.

Resources :

Leaders have some of the most extensive access to resources among minions. However, they are held to a much higher degree of responsibility. Failures and waste are rarely tolerated. Leaders are entrusted to be the ground level voice of their Dark Lord. Misusing that authority will result in severe consequences.

- Full access to general personnel and resources as required for assigned duties
 - Limited access to specialty teams for missions and ongoing projects
 - Full access to general mission support
 - Limited access to specialized mission support
 - Personal offices and generous living space
 - Unique authorization to file formal requests and otherwise navigate lair bureaucracy
 - Access to management areas and management level classified records, including general access to personnel records
 - Opinions carry greater weight with upper and middle management in most cases
 - Effectively unlimited access to plentiful resources with little to no oversight or accountability
-



Operative: Operatives are the special agents and superspies of the supervillain world. Ranging from assassins to social chameleons, most undercover and black ops agents of a Dark Lord are operatives. However, despite their high value, their very role makes them one of the most expendable types of minion. They often receive the least resources and plausible deniability can often leave operatives on their own. In exchange, they are extremely well-trained and equipped.

- 2 Base Dice on all attempts to escape or survive
- 2 Base Dice on all attempts to evade detection or seem convincingly local
- 2 Base Dice on all attempts to engage in petty crime, sabotage, or misdirection
- 2 Base Dice on all general combat actions
- 3 +3 Skill Sets related to combat, infiltration, and sabotage expertise
- 5 +2 Skill Sets related to military, espionage, peacekeeping, or SWAT training and experience

Resources :

Operatives are afforded only the smallest, most spartan of living spaces. They are only given civilian clothes for missions. They generally have no or extremely limited access to petty cash. Going off-site from their assigned post requires management permission. Within the lair and on their own, they are only allowed in the general common areas and their designated training areas. Their training and resources come at a steep cost.

- Preferential treatment in receiving mission support and equipment, from covers to cash to experimental weapons; whatever they say they need for a mission, they are likely to receive.
- Due to preferential treatment in training facilities, they may receive 1 to 3 +1 mission prep bonuses if they have time to train in preparation.

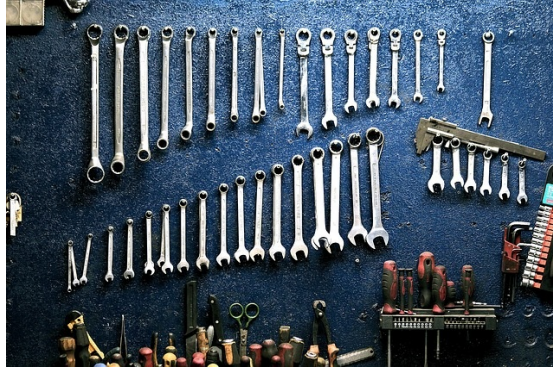
- Most likely minions to have enhancements. When balancing quirk packages, they should receive a modest “discount”. That is, they should receive slightly more benefit or less disadvantage than a typical quirk package.
 - May start with one **minor** enhancement or piece of advanced equipment for free.
-

Pilot: Pilots are a vital backbone of any supervillain operation. From trucks to cutting edge hyperspeed planes, pilots do it all to make sure the people and supplies get to the dark homes and mission sites. They are well-respected, but often overworked.

- 3 Base Dice on any attempt to operate or perform basic repairs on any vehicle, from mopeds to space shuttles
- 2 Base Dice to hotwire or otherwise circumvent vehicle security
- 2 Base Dice to kludge a temporary fix for severe problems, even when it technically shouldn’t work, though it will typically render the vehicle beyond repair thereafter
- 1 +3 Skill Set related to vehicle operations or maintenance
- 2 + 2 Skill Sets related to vehicle research and experimentation
- 3 +1 Skill Sets generally related to vehicles, maintenance, electronics, mechanics, or security

Resources :

- Access to the facilities, personnel, equipment, and resources necessary to operate a vehicle bay
 - Limited access to research facilities and resources
 - Ability to requisition general to mid-level vehicles on demand
 - Limited authorization to requisition advanced and experimental vehicles and vehicle features
 - Preferential treatment for transportation and evacuation requests
-

**Technician:**

Technicians are the ones who keep the general facilities and equipment in working order, as well as repair damage from attacks, missions, and other incidents. While often blending into the background, they are essential to the healthy functioning of any Dark Lord's organization and facilities. While often mocked as overglorified janitors, every minion kowtows to them when they need their apartment or equipment fixed.

- 3 Base Dice on facilities and equipment repairs, maintenance, and troubleshooting.
- 2 Base Dice on using computers and tech devices.
- 3 +2 Skill Sets related to engineering, skilled trades, industrial trades, or laboratory work.
- 5 +1 Skill Sets related to electronics, mechanics, skilled trades, or repair.

Resources

- Easily acquire all the parts, tools, personnel, and other resources needed to fulfill their duties.
- Level of access to facility areas that rivals upper management.
- Permitted to use middle management dining and recreation areas.
- May freely leave base unless on alert.
- Unparalleled familiarity with the strange nooks and crannies of the lair.
- Secret access to forgotten stashes and research areas.
- Preferential treatment for repairs, upgrades, and customization requests.

MSE Adventure: Default Add-Ons

The core release of Our Dark Lord comes with four basic add-on modules: story points, status, quicktime actions, and quirks. The story points module adds a system for players to take narrative control. The status module provides options for tracking stress, injuries, and other harms and conditions; *this version of the status module presumes the use of the quirks module* . The quicktime actions module provides guidance for playing out time sensitive and active conflict scenes. The quirks module adds a system of benefits and drawbacks to add more play options and round out characters.

These four modules are intended to round out play and help guide the story. Don't forget the ultimate rule. If the fun at your table is improved by using additional house rules or opting out of default rules or addons, have at it! Hack and customize Our Dark Lord to fit your house style and player preferences.



Story Points

By default, players receive 3 Story Points to spend each session. (Optionally, players may receive 5 story points per session.) Story Points can be used to influence the narrative. They serve to provide the players a degree of story control outside of their characters. They also provide a seamless way to opt out of scenes.

For each Story Point, a player may pivot a scene. It allows players to shift a scene to a similar one in terms of relative difficulty and broad description. The

pivot should also follow basic story logic. Within that boundary, a lot of narrative freedom should be afforded.

Being pinned down by the enemy in a firefight could transition to escaping from the battlefield but ending up trapped in a hideout while the enemy searches the area. Alternately, the player characters could be captured and placed in a holding area. In either case, it should be roughly as difficult to escape as the battle. Both transitions make obvious story sense and do not change the balance of the tale.

A story point shift may give the players a solid advantage due to skills and other character features. Using the battlefield example, while the group may not be particularly combat skilled, they may have high skills for security and hiding. One of the players chooses to use the escape option. While the situation is roughly equivalent, they gain an obvious defensive advantage with their skills holing up in a hideaway. **That is OK** , as long as *the overall difficulty level and broad description* (pinned down by the enemy, in this case) remains about the same.

The changes should taken without questioning motives to preserve the narrative control and opt out aspects of the Story Points system. Nobody should be put on the spot to justify their decision or explain their discomfort. The players should be relatively free with the narrative control, short of enforcing the basic boundaries.

Just as we don't stop every paragraph to ask ourselves why a writer made that story choice, the group shouldn't usually pester the narrator or players for explanations or motives. Everyone is gather to tell a story; let them tell their parts of the story.

Status



Statuses are gained when negative effects happen. A minion who has been worked to the bone recently may gain the Mental or Physical Status of “Exhausted”. Someone who has been shot may gain the Physical Status of “Gunshot Wound” or “Bleeding Out”. After a particularly violent event, a survivor may gain the Mental Status of “Traumatized” or “In Shock”.

Characters continue to gain additional Statuses until they reach their limit. Then more severe Statuses replace a slot or an existing Status is upgraded to a higher severity. **By default, minions have 2 slots each in Physical and Mental.**

Minions may have **up to 3 total Statuses at a time** , no more than 2 under Physical or Mental. So at most, a default minion can have up to 2 Physical & 1 Mental **OR** 1 Physical & 2 Mental Statuses at a time.

Statuses are intended to make it easier to track negative conditions and, more importantly, **to be a storytelling tool** . Players should act out their characters appropriately to the Statuses gained. They are part of the story and the struggle of a minion.

If desired or necessary, the narrator may impose die penalties and action limits appropriate to the Status. However, **the main focus should be on how they impact the story** , in general and for the character.

Statuses are just one possible consequence of outcomes . Trying to talk an officer out of a ticket with 3 losses may result in a violent encounter with invasive searches and/or incarceration. The story results are largely their own consequences in such an instance. However, it could additionally result in an “Anxiety” or “Paranoia” mental status or perhaps a “Battered” or “Concussion” physical status, as appropriate to the story.

Statuses track the health and well-being of a character. **If the results don’t follow for imposing a status, then don’t shoehorn them in** . Let the story naturally describe and impose them. Statuses should be imposed based on the actions taken and scale of results.

A knife wound with 1 or 2 wins may result in a simple “Stab Wound” status that causes some pain and inconvenience, but no immediate threat or severe restriction. A persuasive speech delivered with 5 wins may sway an entire susceptible crowd, even imposing statuses such as “Obsessive” or “Severely

Distracted”. Let the consequences and scale naturally follow the actions and results.



Death and Knockouts

Permanent comas and death should be rare for player characters. They have survived the odds to reach a level of true recognition in service to their Dark Lord. The “redshirts” are generally people lower on the totem pole. But if you **want** to play a redshirt game and have a blast with hapless characters dying, have at it! Don’t forget the ultimate rule. However, the default rules presume permanent death is rare. How death and disability is handled should be part of the setting discussion.

Player level minions are toughened, grizzled veterans in service to a Dark Lord. Nevertheless, they have their limits. When a character is knocked out of play should be based on the negative statuses acquired. For example, a character with “Exhausted” and “Concussion” will likely pass out if given any sedatives or suffering any further head trauma.

The default rule is when characters are knocked out of play, they return to play in the following scene or scenario change, or after a period of in-story time, as appropriate. The minions could have a supply of clones that wake up with memories up to their most recent death. Like many adventure stories, they may merely pass out or otherwise be temporarily incapacitated until the next scene. Your Dark Lord may have a lair with an advanced medlab, capable of even reviving the recently dead. The options are endless.

Trauma and Quirks

The natural progression of Statuses increasing in severity will eventually result in a character being knocked out of play. For especially severe traumas, they may gain a new Quirk package. The strange magic and hyperscience of the Dark Lords cannot wholly defeat disabilities and traumas, but it can offset the burden. The near-death experience is used to unlock new abilities or as a kind of workers' compensation for the injury. This is represented in the positive side of the quirk packages gained.

As with regular quirk packages, the advantages and disadvantages should be balanced. The player and narrator should collaborate to design a Quirk package that suits the Statuses causing it, Dark Lord served, and overall story. ***The packages should only be given when the character survives an especially severe incident and suffers a deep trauma. They should be rare.***



Most characters should only gain one or two in their lifetime. The most extreme packages, which carry both the heaviest penalties and strongest compensating benefits, should usually only be given on a third or later trauma; they should also displace one or more existing packages.

By default, player level minions never gain more than one top level trauma package (such as those granting high end enhancements, psychic abilities, or magical powers). If they started with such a quirk package, only limited upgrades should be given. There's a limit to how much a Dark Lord can or will invest in low level management.

Mental Trauma



Quirk packages relating to Mental Statuses often result in symptoms like strange behavior, psychological distortions, anxiety responses, and agonizing apathy. Sometimes they are a doorway to the supernatural, drawing the attention of an angry ghost or demon. They can also present themselves as severe social difficulties.

However, those suffering such psychic wounds often gain abilities and even low level powers giving them increased awareness, insights, and the capacity to see or understand certain hyperscience and occult phenomena. Puzzle solving and codebreaking abilities are not uncommon. Psychic abilities such as remote viewing and telepathy are known among the most scarred and gifted of minions.

Physical Trauma



Quirk packages relating to Physical Statuses common result in poor mobility, lethargy, muscle spasms, severe scarring, and sense impairment. Occasionally they will cross into the realms of hyperscience or magic, resulting in effects such as uncontrolled mutation or a magical effect that triggers fight-

or-flight responses in everyday people. They may also manifest as other physical symptoms and oddities, such as the need to consume unusual minerals or an inability to feel the touch of other people.

The other side of the packages are various enhancements and physical evolutions from the healing and/or upgrade process. Improved senses, reduced need for sleep, immunity to poisons, and the ability to go without air for extended periods are common improvements. The most scarred of minions gain modifications like extensive cybernetic enhancement, are subjected to experimental serums, and magical shapeshifting abilities.

Quirks



Quirk Packages

Quirk packages are a balanced set of advantages and disadvantages. The scope and scale of quirk packages available at character creation should ideally be discussed by the group. In the case of one-shot adventures and other circumstances, the narrator may simply lay out the available options.

Positive quirks can range from small mundane boosts representing common talents to enhancements and abilities beyond the normal human capacity. Negative quirks vary from small inconveniences to major disabilities and curses. It is recommended that the package of positive and negative quirks follows a theme, whether in effect, shared origin, or some other manner.

Some narrators and players may find it helps to assign quirks to a 5 or 10 point scale. It can make it a bit easier to balance out and have a better sense of relative advantage or disadvantage. However, it is not necessary and some find the “min/maxing” aspect of it unappealing. Whether you decide to roll with what make common sense to the group or a more formal point system, do whatever works best for your group.

What particular types of quirks are available and what the relative scale is may vary from world to world and story to story. Modest but potent magical powers or cybernetic enhancements may be common for management level minions in your world. Even small superhuman enchantments and

enhancements may be extremely rare in the world of your Dark Lord. Use your discretion and adjust accordingly.

Example Positive Quirks

- Lorem
- Ipsum

Example Negative Quirks

- Dolor
- Sit

Quicktime and Combat



Scenes

The beats of a story are usually broken down into “live time” scenes and “down time” montages. Live time is when the action is happening “as we speak”. Down time is when the action is happening in background and/or over longer periods of time.

Live time scenes may be played out organically in most cases. However, when active conflict, obstacles, or other factors require a series of tests or orderly resolution, the quicktime rules are used and scenes are divided into sequences.

Sequences

Sequences are small slices of a total scene. They generally represent between 10 seconds and one minute of in-story time. Rather than handling things slowly action by action, what the characters are doing during a sequence is described. What can be accomplished may be determined by discretion based on the amount of time in the sequence. It may also be handled using action points.

If you decide to use action points, the default add-on grants each character 3 or 5 action points, depending on your preference or the length of sequence. Looking, thinking, and similar actions take 1 action point. Defensive, distraction, and similar actions use 1 action point. Other “non-combat” actions, including interruption and disarming actions, use 2 action points. Fighting, active combat, and special actions use up 3 action points. Actions that use fewer action points go before those that cost more.

Opposed Actions

When characters are acting in opposition, their totals are compared. The comparison varies by result.

If they both rolled wins , the higher roll wins. Subtract the lower roll from the higher. That is the win result for the winner and lose result for the loser. For example, if one side rolls 4 wins and the other side rolls 2 wins, the winner gets results for 2 wins and the loser gets results for 2 losses.

If both sides roll losses , they both lose as per their individual loss results.

If one side rolls a win and the other side a loss , the win resolves as though one result higher and the lose resolves as one result worse. As examples, a +2 win becomes a +3 win and a -2 loss becomes a -3 loss.

Group Rules

When groups are acting in opposition, they choose an action leader. Their roll is the main roll for their side. Each additional win provides a +1 bonus. Each loss subtracts a -1 penalty. Group support is added together, then affects the main roll. By default, it can never provide more than a +3 win bonus or -3 loss penalty.

Combat and Statuses



Combat should be resolved in a straightforward narrative fashion. There are no special rules for movement, health points, or similar features in Our Dark Lord. What seems to be a rational outcome in context of the story? That's how actions should resolve. You may use add-ons or house rules to implement strategic combat features, but the default system takes a more cinematic approach.

Except for the action point system or similar rules on timing, combat actions should be resolved like any other actions. Rolls are made for each character. The results follow the action taken and the scale of win or loss. Non-aggressive actions that would otherwise be automatic actions are still automatic actions. While the focus of action is different, the general rules still apply.

Due to the focus on storytelling over simulation built into Our Dark Lord, we encourage you to place the narrative over realism. This is a world of supervillain Dark Lords, hyperscience, magic, and impossible feats. Instead of considering how things should work in the real world, consider how things should work within that world and the story being told.

Many results in combat situations do not result in statuses. For example, knocking out the lights doesn't need everyone to take a "Blind" status. It's an obvious environmental factor and doesn't change the *status* of their personal health. Someone disarmed, knocked down, or tied up doesn't necessarily gain any statuses. They are simply disarmed, knocked flat, or restrained.

If the natural flow of the tale imposes conditions, such as the examples of knocked out lights or being restrained, there's no need for a status. The conditions already impose a restriction or penalty. If someone threw salt in a character's eyes, then a status of "Temp. Blinded" or "Impaired Vision" would

be appropriate. If a captor beat or injured the character in a way to limit mobility in addition to the restraints, a status of “Hobbled” or “Battered” would be appropriate. Use reasonable discretion.



Missions

Common Missions

Common missions are everyday assignments and duties. Every minion from the lowest to highest ranks have common missions they must undertake. Patrol duty, maintenance tasks, and supply runs are typical examples. Most common missions can be handled as “down time” actions. However, the players should occasionally go through scenes where there are opportunities to interact with other minions, gain a better understanding of their Dark Lord, or need a bit grounding for contrast with the bigger missions.

Defense Missions

Defense missions are responses to intruders. Most defense missions involve getting young people off the land or dealing with minor protests. However, they scale all the way up to major assaults from high level enemies.

The typical defense mission should range from relatively harmless intruders to growing protest crowds. Like common missions, they can usually be handled through downtime and it's a good idea to include a low level mission occasionally.

More dangerous defense missions should be handled in “live time” play. Defense teams are often sent into the thick of things and everyone is expected to contribute to the defense of their brethren and Dark Lord. Even if the player characters are not a main part of the action, they should have the chance to respond and possibly alter the flow of things.

Major Missions

Major missions are the primary “big” missions assigned to minions. For the lowest ranked and newer minions, major missions are essentially suicide missions. Player character minions have a bit of seasoning and experience, so they are merely challenging rather than suicidal. They are most commonly assigned to the lower and middle ranks of management, though they may be delegated by the managers.

Players should receive a mix of major missions. Some should be best served by delegating the tasks to lesser minions, whether to weed out the weak or merely because it is the best use of resources. Others should be best served by the players assembling as their team and carrying it out, even if with support. Some of the latter may come with direct orders for the player character team to carry it out.

Major missions can cover any number of tasks. They are defined by difficulty, rather than particulars. Such missions may include assaults on not-quite Dark Lord or secret government labs, corporate espionage, changing regional public opinion on a major issue, or retrieving a rare mystical artifact. They will usually need to be handled with a combination of down time and live time over many scenes.



Doomsday Missions

Doomsday missions are the classical impossible and suicide missions. While named after the (in)famous doomsday scenario, they refer to all missions of the highest difficulty and greatest risk. Most often assigned to upper and middle management, it is not uncommon for a given mission's tasks or the constraints of labor shortages to result in assignment to lower management.

For player level characters, assigned doomsday missions will border on suicide missions. Lower level minions become mere fetchers and human shields, if capable of assisting at all. This level of mission should be rare and it is recommended they only occur at the highs and lows of the tale. There should be high stakes on the line and the players should be able to play a key role, if not the main role, in the chapter.

An example doomsday mission would be a raid on a ultra-high security military prison being used to hold one of the Dark Lord's upper managers. Another would be seeking out and acquiring one of the most powerful unique magical items in the world. These are the truly great quests and should present the highest level of challenges for the characters to overcome.

Life



Despite being in service to a Dark Lord, minions are still people. They have the social and relaxation needs that anyone else does. They have a life to live in-between duties and missions. This aspect of the story is also part of Our Dark Lord. The balance between service and personal needs is a hard one to strike. Players must help their characters navigate the fine line of balance.

Depending on the kind of narrative you want to tell, it may be easier or harder for players to find that line. One play style demands that the characters make choices between sacrificing their needed personal time or their (more minor) duties. Another may have a lot of flexibility, so long as the characters do a little bit of everything over the long term. You can even take it to an extreme and relegate missions or personal life time entirely to down time, focusing the storytelling on the other. Follow the ultimate rule.

To help guide the narrative and play, Our Dark Lord breaks down non-mission time into four categories: Training, Recreation, Socialization, and Hobbies. If you may use alternative or additional categories to change the focus or round things out. These defaults are intended as examples that may be used immediately to speed up setup and provide some storytelling guidance. They are not mutually exclusive. Life segments may fall under more than one category. Consider them as a starting point to understanding how minions live their lives.

Optional: Over time, life activities may result in additional skill sets or skill set increases and possibly even quirk packages. This award should be relatively rare and only given after a significant period of in-game time and/or when a major chapter of the story closes. The awards given should be relevant to

how the time was spent. Skills gained in this way will usually be more limited and specific. Quirk packages, which are rarer still, should usually be low level, modest packages.

Training

Training is a large part of service to a Dark Lord. It is the root of additional skills gained with an org role. It is also a vector by which Dark Lords cajole, threaten, persuade, and brainwash their followers. Lower level minions are assigned training schedules. Management level minions, including typical player characters, are allowed to set their own hours. However, all minions are expected to train and abuse of the privilege is regularly punished.

Training should usually be handled in the background as down time. However, player characters should occasionally run through the more difficult training missions. Training classes that have interesting or unique socialization opportunities are also good ones to run through.

Training is not always literal training. Sometimes they are random tests imposed on minions, measured various standards. Other times they may consist of experimental scenarios or procedures. What training time consists of should vary a bit by Dark Lord.



Recreation

Even the most maniacal of Dark Lords usually understands morale and the need for recreational time. Most lairs have a decent variety of entertainment and recreation options to keep followers happy and active. While recreational time is

encouraged, minions that avail themselves too much of the entertainment options may find themselves with extra missions or training assignments (since they seem to have so much free time). On the flip side, minions that avoid recreational activities may find themselves the subject of unwanted scrutiny and firm “advice”.

Individual recreational opportunities should be mostly handled as down time actions with a gloss. More social and group activities should be handled on a case-by-case basis. If a minion is a dedicated tennis doubles player, it would get boring to go through every single game. But certain teams may make it interesting to play out or their regular partner may be having some troubles they need help with.

Socialization

Dark Lords generally encourage their minions to get together and socialize. Familiarity and friendships help strengthen the bonds of their organization and increase productivity. They understand that normal clique dynamics and office politics will also cause some strife. Indeed, many Dark Lords encourage vicious competition among their underlings.

Regardless of positive or negative motives, social events and relatively generous allowances for personal time are quite common. Unless it is between minions of particularly disparate ranks or similarly inappropriate, personal relationships are not usually policed. Most lairs and outposts will be flexible with cohabitation arrangements as space permits. Also, most player level characters are assigned private quarters when possible, so guests and personal social activities are usually not a problem.

Socialization time should allow the character to build ties with others in service to the Dark Lord. Just like the player characters, the others in the organization are also just people trying to serve and live their lives as best they can. Getting to know the others around them provides more context for the story and many storytelling opportunities in itself.

Hobbies



Minions are encouraged to have hobbies. Cultivating interests is considered healthy and a good way to keep the Dark Lord's followers busy and out of too much trouble. Even when hobbies are individual activities, hobby groups are usually common in lairs. If a minion has no hobbies, they will generally be encouraged by their managers to find one or two.

Minions in good standing will have hobby supplies available within reason, as the Dark Lord's resources allow. However, it's not uncommon for minions to have to engage in theft to acquire the materials they need, especially when they have more unusual hobbies or an expensive project they are working on. Hobby groups often come into play as they share what they have with other hobbyists. Whether this is more generous or more of a barter market varies from lair to lair.

Hobbies can range from reading a particular genre of books to complex home/DIY electronics experimentation. Players are encouraged to be as mundane or imaginative as they wish with choosing their character's special interests. Have a bit of fun with it and add a bit of flavor to your character. Help define them as an individual with their own wants, needs, and interests.

Your Dark Lord



Dark Lords

Dark Lords are each unique, powerful individuals that seek after goals unacceptable to common society. They are the supervillains, immortal spellcasters, and mad scientists that threaten the world. Despite the world standing against them, they are determined to carry out their twisted visions. In order to help guide their creation for your story, some broad guidelines are included.

Type

What type of Dark Lord are they? That's an important question. Dark Lords comes in many varieties from the bleeding edge inventor to the undying witch. What type of supervillain they are determines much about the culture of their minions, the available equipment and resources, the powers and abilities they have to wield, and so on.

While they often are, Dark Lords don't have to be human. Aliens, vampires, and other creatures can easily become a force in the world with followers behind them and plans to carry out. Feel free to be creative in deciding what type of Dark Lord will rule the lair in your story.

Common Types

These are merely meant as common examples. They can be used to quickstart narratives and/or give you food for thought. Feel free to be inventive in creating Dark Lords for your stories. In the 0.1.2 Alpha release, there are five example types: Ageless Witch, Brainy Brute, True Egomaniac, Discarded Experiment, Wild Inventor.

Ageless Witch



The Ageless Witch may be centuries, even perhaps millenia, old. They are masters of the occult arts, maintaining their eternal vigilance against Death through complex (and often cruel) rituals. They have survived through the ages not just on magic alone, but also through incredible wit and the wisdom of experience.

Their arcane abilities almost automatically draw followers to them, some wishing to serve such power and others hoping to gain even a sliver of it. While they are often aloof from all but their closest followers, they tend to avoid unnecessary cruelty. Devotion is a more powerful tool than fear among one's servants.

Witches will usually have a wide assortment of spells at their beck and call, as well as wear several magical charms. Their closest associates will also usually be her apprentices, trained in the deep levels of the mystical arts. However, they almost always retain the deepest secrets, such as immortality, for themselves. They also often do not reveal the full potential of rituals, spells, and artifacts given to their minions. They are mysterious and wary of others learning too much, even the ones they trust most.

Ageless Witches tend to have vast riches accumulated over the many years. They also have a deep reserve and variety of magic to call upon, as well as numerous mystical artifacts. However, their access to and understanding of technology is greatly limited. They also heavily rely on their right hand minions to carry out management and organizational tasks, their humanity withered over the ages and the memory of how to properly socialize faint and fading. Nevertheless, they are terrible foes and their minions are fierce opponents. The occult focus grant abilities most are woefully unprepared for.

Brainy Brute



The Brainy Brute was once an enforcer or minion themselves, whether because of raw physical presence or a sadistic streak. Beneath the exterior of raw brutality sat a brilliant mind, possessed of learning and intelligence nobody could have guessed. When the right opportunity came up, they seized it and became one of the world's newest Dark Lords.

They often rely on their rags-to-riches story as a populist recruiting tool. The Brutes are known for socializing with “the little guys” among their minions. However, they **are** brutes. Failure is often punished swiftly and violently. This can paradoxically inspire paranoid fear and deep love while around the Brute. It is an abusive situation.

Brutes lack the special powers and abilities many other Dark Lords possess. They also don't have the applied or specialized knowledge that others do. However, their brilliance outshines even most geniuses and they are a great threat in raw physical ability. One might say they are the peak of human capacity, but raw and unrefined.

Brainy Brutes rely heavily on their minions and labor prisoners. While they are true geniuses, they lack the practical know-how of inventors or the abilities of a supernatural creature. However, they are planners and managers par

excellence. If they can recruit the right talent, they can lead their followers to great feats. Also, while they lack specialist knowledge, they excel at spotting and exploiting flaws in the proposals and plans of others. What they lack in raw special abilities and resources, they make up for in their management talents and ability to spot & strike weak points.

Discarded Experiment



The Discarded Experiment was once part of a secret research project or an unfortunate victim accidentally exposed to its efforts. Whether the result of genetic engineering, bionic enhancement, magical rituals, or other acts, they were permanently changed. Even if they were once human, they are no longer. Uplifted animals and sentient machines fall under this type, as examples. They were able to escape their makers and avoid those hunting them long enough to build the following and resource they needed to defend themselves. In the process, they rose to the rank of Dark Lord.

This type of lord is often unstable and distracted by strange obsessions. A self-destructive focus on revenge is also common. Which is problematic for them, because most Discards have no idea who made them and every new clue just seems to cast more doubt on the matter. Whatever groups are powerful enough to be capable of making Dark Lords are beyond the reach of even such supervillains, at least in terms of being exposed. This can make things rather chaotic and unpredictable for the minions serving such masters.

Discarded Experiments almost universally possess superhuman abilities. These abilities should be created to match their personality and the kind of experiments they were subjected to. A woman subjected to bionic implant experiments could have enhanced strength, stamina, and reflexes, as well as a wide variety of sensory options. Someone else put through rituals to make them

a demonic vessel may be able to summon demons and temporarily send people to Hell.

The real threat Discards pose is the possibility of collecting the right set of minions to unlock the secrets of their origin. Genetically engineered experiments may be able to re-engineer viral remnants to create new bio-weapons and experiments of their own. Those intentionally exposed to unusual cosmic phenomena may help their team discover a new way of understanding and using radiation or quantum mechanics in superscience devices. But their Holy Grail is creating another Discard like themselves and lesser versions to serve in their army.

Discarded Experiments that survive and evolve to become Dark Lords have at least some rudimentary understanding of recruitment and management. However, they typically only directly recruit and manage a small inner circle, tasking them with building the workforce of minions and managing the day to day operations of the lair. Hyperscience equipment and enhancements are exceptionally common in service to a Discard, but it is usually experimental and often unreliable tech. The availability of general resources is also rather erratic and unpredictable, like the Dark Lord that rules.

True Egomaniac



True Egomaniacs are self-obsessed but inhumanly charismatic leaders. They are consumed with the desire to make the world see them as they see themselves. Some believe themselves a messiah, while others merely have the narcissistic view that the world would better off under their thumb. This is the type of Dark Lord most likely to have plans to take over the world or gain influence over the nations of the world. Their narcissism is their shortcoming, however, as it makes them utterly blind to their own missteps and flaws.

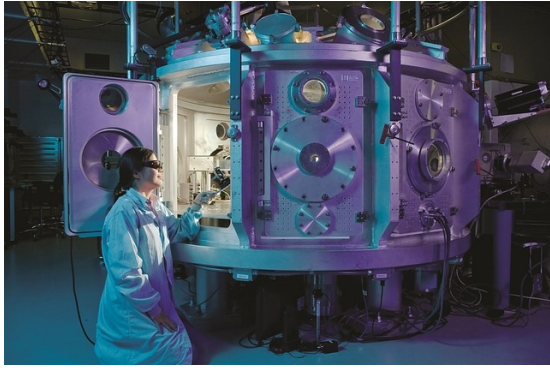


Egomaniacs often find their origins as the directors of off-budget black ops programs that were cancelled or shady corporations technically shut down for illegal and unethical experiments. Rather than accept that fate, they seized the opportunity to start their own (of course, better) organization. This is both help and hindrance. While they usually have well-supplied, well-run organizations, they also lack the hard knocks experience and wisdom that other Dark Lords acquired in building their empires. Combined with the egotism that blinds them, they are the most vulnerable to attacks from other Dark Lords.

Beyond their incredible charisma and persuasiveness, True Egomaniacs are generally human, if particularly intelligent like most Dark Lords. They rarely, if ever, possess any enhancements or other superhuman abilities. However, even the most jaded immortal and most hostile enemies can be swayed by their irresistible charm. It is their one great strength and they put it to good use. Assemblies and speeches are very common for followers of these Dark Lords. They will not pass up the opportunity to build fanatical devotion.

Egomaniacs are usually quite wealthy and have a lot of material resources at their disposal. While minion recruits are exceptionally well-chosen and have dropout & loss rates far lower than with other Dark Lords, the blind egotism often leaves one or more key areas understaffed or the organization short on particular experts. As a result, while broad cash, equipment, and support are freely available, hyperscience and other specialist support and gear are exceptionally rare. Various labs and parts of the lair may also randomly go out of service as the labor misallocation causes essential maintenance to be missed.

Wild Inventor



Driven mad by their insights, Wild Inventors discovered an irrational path of knowledge that allows them create occult and hyperscience inventions as a matter of course. Their insanity and distractibility is often all that puts a limit to what they can achieve. Inventors often have noble intentions in their own mind, but they are consistently blind to or rationalize the costs of their actions. Their goals are typically near-impossible and often in violation of some scientific theory or law as it is currently known.

Inventors are usually enthusiastic, friendly figures. Anyone who shows at least some interest in their lectures and creations will usually be treated warmly. However, they can be quite moody and perceived insults to their insights can provoke extremely dramatic, even violent, responses. They also usually have some bizarre, difficult to understand unifying philosophy that explains their insights. Anyone capable of grasping it will be sure to curry the Wild Inventor's favor... but also their unnerving attention and inconvenient meetings. What's also striking is despite their inventive genius, they do not seem particularly intelligent or educated. It is a paradox many minions debate.

Wild Inventors have a broad range of experimental technology at their command, often blending both magic and hyperscience in unexpected ways. They are formally neither scientists nor occultists, but rather explorers treading unknown paths of invention. They also often possess a variety of supersenses and/or psychic abilities. The insights they've gained into the universe have changed them forever. Many enemies have underestimated them due to their strangely unremarkable intelligence and often frail physique. That was a deadly error. Between their unusual tech and superhuman abilities, they are truly formidable foes.

Working for an Inventor can be exciting. The strange technology blending the occult and scientific can result in incredible equipment and enhancements. In contrast to most bleeding edge gear, it is shockingly reliable. The obsessions of Wild Inventors also generally result in a wide range of experts, laboratories, research, and experimental approaches being embraced. The knowledge pool and more traditionally experimental technology available is far broader than would be otherwise available. Money can be intermittent, as the Dark Lord and their primary followers are often distracted by other goals. More traditional support is also harder to come by with fewer options, as the Dark Lord's obsessions consume the resources of the lair and organization.

Vision

Every Dark Lord has a Vision. They have a unique perspective on the world. Their weird experiences changed them. They see what must be done, whether for themselves or the greater good. They have a crystal clear Vision of who they are and what they must accomplish. It is a very part of what makes them a Dark Lord.

An Ageless Witch may see herself as the Only Hope of the World with a goal of All World Leaders Under Command. That is her Vision. A Discarded Experiment may see himself as the Next Step in Evolution with a goal of Establishing the New Species. A Wild Inventor may see herself as the Oracle of the New Science with a goal of Socially Engineered Nation.

Take time to consider how your Dark Lord sees the world and what they hope to accomplish in the bigger scheme of things. Let it help guide the focus of the organization and what kinds of missions & stories the players will encounter. Be creative and imaginative in how it impacts the Dark Lord's behavior, obsessions, and the general day-to-day life of minions.

Dark Home



Every Dark Lord has at least one dark home in the form of their main lair. However, only the youngest or most covert of Dark Lords maintains but a single location. Most orgs will also maintain several outposts and safehouses. These locations are essential to the reach of the Dark Lord and the working capacity of their followers. The most powerful of Dark Lords have up to three full lairs, in addition to a staggering number of outposts and safehouses.



Lair

The lair is the main headquarters and primary home of a Dark Lord. They range from the classical isolated castle to underground complexes in the middle of popular cities. It is presumed to have an extremely high level of security and the surrounding grounds and areas are under constant surveillance. Any number of traps, failsafes, and other security features are present, appropriate to the Dark Lord. It is also where the vast bulk of minions live and work.

Lairs are equipped with all of the storage, living, training, research, and other space the Dark Lord and their followers require. They often have unused and/or unexplored areas and have slowly grown in used space over time. Each lair is customized to a particular Dark Lord's needs, tastes, obsessions, and personal habits. This can often be inconvenient or unsettling to minions, but it's usually treated as "just one of those things".

Don't get too obsessed with the details. You don't need to draw a whole architectural map or write out a detailed listing of everything. It's OK to throw things in on the fly. However, the narrator and players should have a decent

mutual understanding of the general facilities, style, and a basic concept of the layout.

Outposts



While lairs are of central importance, outposts play a key role. They are generally offices or special mission facilities for minions. Much smaller than lairs, they are also typically much less advanced and hidden in plain sight more often. They have some residential facilities and are well-stocked for materials and personnel within their narrow missions. Law or business offices associated with the Dark Lord aren't going to have much in the way of weaponry or medical supplies. A tactical ops mission center isn't likely to have much in the way of computer equipment or corporate espionage intelligence. But what they do focus on, they will be well-staffed and well-equipped.

Safehouses

Safehouses differ from outposts in their purpose and placement. While outposts serve as active operations centers, safehouses are hidden locations for laying low and protecting assets. They are often extremely well-armored with robust security systems. Stocks of survival food and long shelf life goods are plentiful. There's usually a few high quality weapons stashes. Safehouses are also often connected to a bunker (where much of the food and weaponry will be

stored). May even have decently stocked essential medicine pharmacies and crude but effective emergency surgery rooms.

The features may vary with equivalents as appropriate for the Dark Lord. A spellcasting Dark Lord may place powerful protective wards on the site and provide a set of chests that provide effectively endless fresh food and water. A hyperscience Dark Lord may use replicators rather than physical stores of equipment and supplies. Feel free to be imaginative and think of different ways your Dark Lord may approach safehouses.

Dark Strengths



All Dark Lords are possessed of “Dark Strengths”, the characteristics that set them apart from garden variety dictators and monsters. These are not merely supernatural abilities. They are no common wizard or cutting edge scientist. They are Dark Lords, supervillains at the top end of the food chain. They are legends in their own right. Their capacities reflect that.

Influence

Influence is the control a Dark Lord exercises on the society around them. Whether through special abilities or grinding footwork, Dark Lords typically work hard to bend society around them into their grasp. For a default Dark Lord choose one international, two national or regional, and three local areas of influence. Feel free to vary that as appropriate for your Dark Lord. There are no hard rules for them, only suggestions. Influences can range from law enforcement to parks departments, from social movements to fringe cults.

Within their named areas of influence, Dark Lords range from highly respected to absolutely obeyed. These broad networks of control are essential for those acting on the scale and scope of the Dark Lord. They are typically used to run constant interference against enemies and carry out propaganda campaigns. Local specialized influence is often geared towards daily convenience or personal interests. Law enforcement is a common local influence for obvious reasons. A Dark Lord might choose to exercise utter control over local garden clubs or bookstores because of their obsessions or interests. Be creative and don't be afraid to throw a few curveballs in the mix.



Resources

Resources are everything that a Dark Lord can call upon from manpower to cash to equipment. Based on their type and vision, lay out what kind of resources they have at their disposal. What do they have a lot of? What are they short on? Is it all steady or is anything erratic? It can help to break it down into staffing, money, equipment, special facilities, and general facilities. How it all appears depends on the Dark Lord, especially type, but it's important to get a general idea of how much is available in general. It will impact everything from the lair to daily experiences of minions.

Overall, Dark Lords have access to resources that even billionaires cannot boast. It is not a mere matter of cash. Their army of followers and all the skills they bring are vast resource in itself. But the nature of Dark Lords to delve into areas beyond the limits of common science and human capacity provide them with the potential to do and acquire so much more than any normal person could. Most Dark Lords have trillions of dollars worth of half-finished experiments, rejected tech, and other research sitting half-forgotten in abandoned labs and

closed libraries. It is hard to overstate the value and depth of resources possessed by even the poorest Dark Lord.

Powers



Powers are the superhuman capacities of Dark Lords. While some command supernatural powers like sorcery or hyperscience enhancements like cybernetics, others possess seemingly more mundane powers such as post-genius intelligence, “impossible” management skills, or an uncanny knack for predicting individual actions. What unifies them all is the capacity to perform far above human capacity.

The powers possessed by Dark Lords are of a scale beyond that of even the enhancements and special abilities of their most powerful followers. Most have several powers they can call upon at any time. They also usually have additional powers that can be summoned with time and effort. Some Dark Lords find their powers are innate while others rely on artifacts, technology, and inventions. Regardless, few are their peers but for other Dark Lords.

Dark Lords often exercise some of their powers in showy and public fashions. This is a calculated move. People already tend to think of them in terms of their powers, at the expense of attention to their influence and resources. Most Dark Lords encourage their enemies to focus in that way. They

will not typically be able to learn anything sufficient to make them a threat, while their softer capabilities are shielded through distraction. It also serves propaganda purposes for recruitment, particularly when the ranks of low level minions have run a little thin. It's a dark world and they need disposable youth.

Stock Dark Lord

Dark Lords should rarely be brought into direct play. One should also assume that their power level is far beyond that of most. This stock kit presumes to represent the abilities that Dark Lords have “publicly” demonstrated. A Dark Lord “defeated” at this level of ability is merely driven off, whether more literally or in the sense that the supervillain decides the engagement is too boring or distracting.

- 3 +5 Skill Sets, 7 +3 Skill Sets (Optional: 10 +2 Skill Sets)
- Access to all type- appropriate top level equipment
- Access to a full army of specialists, managers, and rank & file minions
- 5 Base Dice on all defensive actions
- 3 Base Dice on 5 action types of choice
- 2 Base Dice on 5 action types of choice
- Physical and Mental, 5 Status Slots each, 10 max Status
- 2 offensive powers, 2 defensive powers, 2 non-combat or general use powers; usable at no cost
- 5 additional powers that may be used on a limited basis or at a cost

Special: Dark Lords may emulate up to 7 enhancements at a time using worn or embedded equipment, pre-cast spells and rituals, or equivalent preparation. Most of these abilities have limited uses or one-off effects, such as ignoring all potential injuries and effects for a full sequence or creating a set of illusory doppelgangers.

Enemies

Police



Depending on the Dark Lord's local Influence, the local police may be a regular thorn in the side. An area-based Sheriff or State Trooper is a common foe. They are often unbelievably by their peers or are one of the rare few with the courage to face down the evil. But they do have their positions and its resources at their disposal.

While they rarely present a true threat, they are more than a match for low level and newbie minions. They can also pile on citations and engage in minor harassment, creating headaches and sometimes becoming a significant disruption. The use of murder or powers to dispose of them is rare, as it tends to draw an even more dedicated and dangerous opponent.

International police missions and national police agencies pose a much more serious threat to Dark Lords. Those law enforcement officers are hired from the cream of the crop and receive top notch training. Agents and officers assigned to departments and task forces dealing with Dark Lords are among the most intelligent and deadly people in the world. Except for the Dark Lords themselves and their most advanced righthand minions, their SWAT and raid teams present a true threat to all minions. Their weaponry, tactics, and specialized research make them a superior foe. Thankfully, their resources are

limited and the threats are many. Most Dark Lords will never have anything but minor encounters with such agencies.

Stock Police Enemies

Beat/Patrol Cop

- 2 +2 Skill Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- General Police Gear
- Low Level Police Support
- 2 Base Dice on attempts to detain, restrain, and interrupt aggressive actions
- Physical and Mental, 1 Status Slot each, 2 max Status

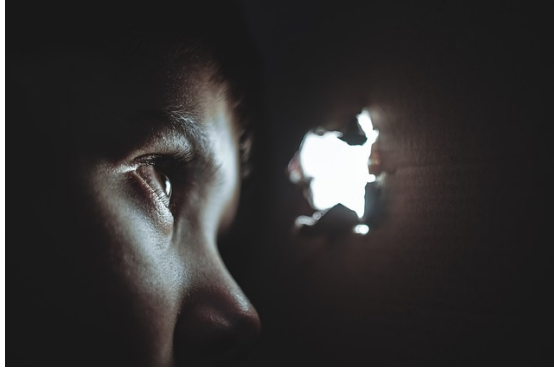
Detective/Veteran

- 1 +3 Skill Set, 3 +2 Skill Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- General Police Gear
- Detective or Riot Control Equipment
- Mid Level Police Support
- Physical and Mental, one @ 1 Status Slot, one @ 2 Slots, 3 max Status
- 2 Base Dice for investigation, tracking, crowd control, and mass combat

SWAT/Special Agent

- 2 +3 Skills Sets, 3 +3 Skill Sets, 5 +1 Skill Sets
- General Police Gear
- Riot Control Equipment
- SWAT and special operations equipment
- High Level Police Support
- 3 Base Dice on general combat actions and attempts to capture or restrain
- 2 Base Dice for searching and tracking
- 2 Base Dice for planning, strategy, and tactical actions
- Physical and Mental, 2 Slots each, 4 max Status

Spies



Intelligence and security agencies throughout the world have adapted to the rise of supervillains. They have their own secret cadres of superhumans and hyperscience research programs. Due to a secret agreement between most nations of the world, their primary focus is keeping Dark Lord discoveries and resources out of military, mercenary, and weapon dealing hands. This greatly minimizes their risk to most Dark Lords. However, it does create another set of headaches.

Spies can infiltrate for years at a time, feeding back intelligence and operations info to their peers and superiors. A given spy agency or international operation may have a better understanding of the Dark Lord's army and resources than the Dark Lord himself. This can become a true existential threat when they sell that information to rival for their own purposes or the Dark Lord gets the short end to picked as the bone to throw domestic law enforcement.

As a result, most Dark Lords are deeply paranoid about spies and other infiltrators. Minions may often find themselves faced with arbitrary, even absurd, loyalty tests at random. While saboteurs rarely get far and the spies themselves present little threat, a the possibility of a deep cover mole still risks everything the Dark Lord has worked to build. Discovering spies is highly rewarded as a general rule.

Stock Spy Enemies

Field Agent

- 1 +3 Skill Set, 2 +2 Skill Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- General, Basic Spy, and Mission Specific Gear
- Low Level Intelligence Support
- 3 Base Dice for all survival and escape attempts

- 2 Base Dice for general combat and defensive actions
- Physical and Mental, one @ 1 Status Slot, one @ 2 Slots, 3 max Status

Deep Plant

- 2 +3 Skill Sets, 2 +2 Skill Sets, 5 +1 Skill Sets
- General, Trusted Asset, and Mission Specific Gear
- Deep Cover resources and equipment, including all necessary IDs and references
- 1 to 3 pieces of low to mid level advanced gear
- 3 Base Dice on all attempts at acting, mimicry, and deception
- 2 Base Dice on evasion and escape attempts
- Physical and Mental, 2 Slots in each, 4 max Status

Special Bonus:

5 Base Dice against all attempts to resist interrogation, even against abilities and methods that would not otherwise allow resistance (including magic and hyperscience)

Top Level Asset

- 3 +3 Skill Sets, 5 +2 Skill Sets, 7 + 1 Skill Sets
- Full access to all regular to advanced equipment
- Dedicated team support
- 1 to 3 pieces of top level equipment, including mystical, hyperscience, or experimental items
- 3 Base Dice on all socializing, deception, misdirection, and combat actions
- 2 Base Dice on attempts related to juryrigging, evasion, security, and using tech
- Physical and Mental, 3 Status Slots each, 6 max Status

Special:

Top Level Agents have one low to mid level enhancement without a quirk package (free of downsides/benefit only). They also have one or two other low to high level enhancements in a normally balanced quirk package with downsides.

Survivors





Survivors are those who managed to escape both death and the Dark Lord. Hostages, slaves, and torture victims who fled from the clutches of minions are common examples. They are often driven by a consuming need for revenge.

Stock Survivor Enemies

Vigilante

- 2 +2 Skill Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- Crude equipment and common weapons available in department and sporting stores
- 2 Base Dice to escape or survive
- 2 Base Dice to find clues and track minions of their target Dark Lord
- Physical and Mental, 1 Status Slot each, 2 max Status

Guerilla

- 1 +3 Skill Set, 3 +2 Skill Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- Modest quality homemade and home-customized equipment, common weapons, and a limited collection of rare grey and black market equipment and weapons
- Low to mid level general support and safehouse access
- 2 Base Dice on hit & run and unorthodox tactics
- 2 Base Dice on evasion, hiding, and misdirection
- 2 Base Dice to find clues and track minions of their target Dark Lord
- Physical and Mental, 2 Slots Each, 3 max Status

Nemesis

- 3 +3 Skill Sets, 3 +2 Skills Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- Skilled custom-crafted and customized equipment and weapons, a considerable store of rare and black market equipment and weapons, one prized advanced to hyperscience or mystical item

- Extensive contacts and support providing a free flow of general supplies and assistance, as well as the ability to call upon a mission team consisting of three to five vigilantes with a guerilla leader
- 3 Base Dice on defense, escape, and evasion
- 3 Base Dice on hit & run and unorthodox tactics
- 2 Base Dice on sabotage, intrusion, and stealth tactics
- 2 Base Dice to find clues and track minions of their target Dark Lord
- Physical and Mental, 3 Slots Each, 5 max Status

Quirk Package:

- Cannot be surprised, cannot lead into ambush, automatic rolls (3 base dice, no other bonuses) to avoid triggering sensors and traps
- Obsessed with Dark Lord, psychotic symptoms, reckless



Rivals

The greatest threat to any Dark Lord is another. When they go to war, it is almost certain one of them will perish. Other Dark Lords are often drawn into the conflict and the devastation to their organizations and the wider world is severe. As a result, the great villains of the world have managed to form a rough, hostile peace. Any of them taking to the level of outright war are quickly turned on by all the others.

Despite the peace, there's often constant hostilities. Territorial claims often come into the mix. Conflicts between one Lord's plans and another's are also quite common. Competition for rare resources and the most desirable minion recruits drive a lot of aggression as well.

Stock Minion Enemies

Enemy Redshirt

- 2 +2 Skill Sets, 2 +1 Skill Sets
- Minimal equipment and support
- 2 Base Dice on escape and evasion attempts
- Physical and Mental, 1 Status Slot each, 1 max Status

Veteran Minion

- 1 +3 Skill Set, 2 +2 Skill Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- Standard equipment and support
- 1 Org Role
- Physical and Mental, 2 Status Slots each, 3 max Status

Special Weapon

- 3 +3 Skill Sets, 3 +2 Skill Sets, 3 +1 Skill Sets
- Standard and specialty equipment and support
- 3 Base Dice on all combat-related actions
- 2 Base Dice on stealth, intrusion, infiltration, and security related tasks
- Physical and Mental, 3 Status Slots each, 6 max Status

Special: Special Weapons receive one low to mid level enhancement and one mid to high level enhancement without a quirk package and downsides. They additionally have two or three other low to high level enhancement with quirk packages and downsides. In addition, they have control and failsafe systems of some sort, which should be assumed and not counted as negatives for the additional quirk packages.

Middle Manager

- 3 +3 Skill Sets, 6 +2 Skill Sets, 9 +1 Skill Sets
- Advanced equipment and support by default
- Access to hypertechnology, mystical, and other experimental/superhuman level equipment and weapons
- Ability to call upon a special weapon
- Ability to summon teams of redshirts and veterans
- Physical and Mental, 3 Status Slots, 5 max Status

Special: Middle managers in Dark Lord orgs may emulate up to 3 enhancements free of charge without quirk packages using worn or embedded advanced and special equipment and weapons. Exosuits and mystical amulets are two particularly popular examples.

